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When the world needs principled, purposeful leadership against aggression, proliferation and terror, NATO must step to the fore because few others can or will. NATO nations must act as if the safety of the world depends on their individual actions because, very often, it does.

Volume 13, Number 2

Expanding NATO Protects World Peace

Prepared remarks by Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright at the North Atlantic Council Ministerial Meeting, NATO Headquarters, Brussels, Belgium, Dec. 16, 1997.

Mr. [NATO] Secretary-General [Javier Solana], Mr. [honorary NATO] President d'Honneur [Danish President Neils Helveg Petersen], fellow foreign ministers, distinguished colleagues. I am very pleased to speak with you on behalf of the United States.

I am joined here today by, among others, our ambassador to NATO, Robert Hunter, who is attending his last North Atlantic Council ministerial. Ambassador Hunter has done an outstanding job in making it possible for NATO to remain the premier alliance in the world -- while reaching out to new members across the continent.

I think that the secret to our success in this period has been quite straightforward. We did not choose to play it safe. At every crossroads, we took the most farsighted way forward.

And so we meet today, having begun to enlarge our alliance, while forging a partnership with Russia and Ukraine, building meaningful ties with other European democracies, carrying out the most complex military operation in NATO's history and adapting its internal structures to meet the challenges of a radically different world.

Thoughtful critics doubted whether we were ready to take any of these steps. Virtually no one believed we could take all five at once. In each case, we overcame the temptation to substitute talk for action and to push hard decisions into the distant future.

Our immediate agenda involves making good on the commitments our leaders made at the Madrid summit. I am happy to say we are keeping those promises. I am confident we will be ready to move ahead by the time of the next leaders' summit in 1999.

Two weeks ago, our defense ministers approved a new command structure for NATO, which will reduce the number of headquarters from 65 to 20. We have cleared the way for Spain's full integration into NATO. And we welcome France's intention to draw ever closer to full participation in alliance activities.

Today, we hold the first ministerial of the NATO-Ukraine Commission. Our challenge will be to seize the opportunities it provides, to build on the quiet success story that is unfolding in NATO's new "distinctive partnership" with Ukraine.

Tomorrow, we will meet once again with Russia in the Permanent Joint Council as part of a process that is historic in importance but increasingly businesslike and even routine in its implementation. We are continuing to build a reservoir of practical, day-to-day cooperation with Russia into which the mutual suspicions of the past can dissolve.

We will also meet with all of our new partners tomorrow in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. In the future, much of what NATO does will be done in cooperation with the members of the EAPC, which can

only grow in importance.

And of course, in just a few hours, we will join the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to sign their protocols of accession to NATO. This is another step forward in a process that will be on our agenda for many years to come.

Today's signing is not just a ceremony, and it is much more than a bureaucratic formality.

We are signing the accession protocols now because NATO has determined that the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland are ready to meet the obligations that allies share. The strength and reliability of their democracies places them squarely within the European mainstream. Their economies are growing. Their military infrastructure is more advanced than many of us expected. They have made good progress in adapting their armed forces to NATO's standards and procedures, thanks in large part to the Partnership for Peace. And we are confident that over time they will achieve a mature military capability.

At the same time, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland are pledging to us today that they know exactly what will be required of them as NATO allies.

These nations are accepting a fundamental change in their national identities. For decades they looked to the free world for reassurance and support in their struggles for freedom and independence. Now, for the very first time, they are accepting responsibility for the freedom and security of others. We will be counting on them to stand by us in our future hours of need, and when other nations look for our reassurance and support.

This month, we have also reached agreement on the resource implications of enlargement. We made the wise choice to base that agreement on an assessment of the military requirements of larger NATO and the new security commitments it will entail. We now have a clear picture of what NATO's current and future allies will have to do to meet those commitments, and of what the commonly funded costs of a larger NATO will be.

By approving NATO's cost studies, we have turned estimates and projections into commitments, commitments which each of us must now carry out. We have also confirmed what our leaders stated in Madrid: The costs of a larger NATO will be real, for any security worth having carries a price. But largely due to the preparations our future allies have made, those costs will be manageable. They will be met. And they will be shared fairly.

Our next challenge will be to secure the ratification of NATO enlargement by our parliaments. We must not prejudge the outcome of this process or take it for granted. President Clinton and I have been working intensively with members of both parties in our own Congress and we know that our congressional and public debate will grow more vigorous in the weeks to come.

At the same time, we must remember that when the 16th parliament has voted, it will not mark the conclusion of this effort. At most, it will be the end of the beginning. We will have to work hard to ensure that the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland are fully and successfully integrated into our alliance.

We must also remember that our leaders have pledged NATO's doors would remain open to new members. And they gave substance to that commitment by agreeing to continue NATO's intensified dialogues with those nations that still aspire to membership.

A new stage of dialogues should begin in January. We need to be ready to review and consider next steps in this process at the Washington summit, and our partners need to be ready, too.

The rationale for the next round of NATO enlargement is exactly the same as the rationale for the first: It will help deter external threats to the trans-Atlantic community. It will expand the area of Europe where wars do not happen. It will give aspiring countries an incentive to deepen their reforms and to cooperate

with all their neighbors. It will strengthen our alliance by adding capable new members that share our interests and values. And it will advance the political unity of Europe, diminishing still further its historical divisions.

We should also approach the next round exactly as we approached the first.

We should all avoid making specific commitments to specific countries. There is no need to raise expectations by playing favorites or to assume that our parliaments will always agree. As in the past, we must also insist that the remaining candidates for membership meet the highest objective standards before they are invited to join -- that they clear the highest hurdles of reform, demonstrate they can meet the full obligations of membership and show us that their inclusion will advance NATO's strategic interests.

At the same time, we should continue to make clear that every European democracy that is interested in membership is eligible for membership, regardless of its history or geography. And we must continue to stress that the question is not whether NATO will welcome new allies, but when and how. At this point, saying "maybe" to another round is not much better than saying "no." In fact, given the progress being made across central and eastern Europe, we can all be confident that the first will not be the last -- and willing to say so.

We must be responsible and deliberate in moving forward, but we must move forward. We need a process that tells aspiring allies exactly what they must do and how they must change to make membership a possibility. That is the purpose -- the very practical purpose -- of the intensified dialogues.

Of course, NATO is far from the only instrument we are using to build a Europe whole, free and at peace. With the enlargement of the European Union, the growing importance of the OSCE [Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe], and our joint efforts to promote integration within northern and southeastern Europe, old barriers to cooperation and trade are coming down across the Baltic, the Aegean and the Atlantic.

We must also remember that the most dangerous threat to our vision exists within those European nations that still resist the trend toward integration -- within nations where democratic principles are under attack, such as Belarus and Serbia, and where the embers of conflict still smolder, including Bosnia. This has been an encouraging year for the peace process in Bosnia, largely because our troops are doing their jobs with both customary skill and vigor.

Far from the endless quagmire that some people feared, we have been able to reduce our troop presence as the peace process has taken hold. And I believe a consensus is slowly forming among Bosnians, if not for the state of harmony and understanding that would be ideal, then for the state of security and normality to which any shattered society must initially aspire.

Last month, Bosnian Serbs held parliamentary elections in which voters had a choice, independents had a voice, and the party of power lost almost half its seats. In October's municipal elections, almost 150,000 Bosnians voted across ethnic boundaries, making it clear they do not want to be separated from their homes by permanent lines of partition.

Paramilitary police forces have been brought under [the NATO Stabilization Force's] oversight. We have shut down incendiary broadcasting and expanded the reach of the independent media. Economic recovery is accelerating in those areas that are implementing the Dayton agreement. Refugees are beginning to return to a number of communities, though this process remains painfully slow.

In addition, 20 indicted war criminals have now surrendered to the war crimes tribunal or been seized -- 12 since our last ministerial. This has placed a welcome strain on the tribunal's resources, and I am pleased to announce that as we promised, we intend to provide the additional resources the tribunal now needs to conduct trials expeditiously. The United States is prepared to contribute \$1 million. This, combined with a generous donation from the Dutch government, will build a new courtroom for the tribunal by early next spring.

But despite the gains of the past two years, much remains to be done before we can say with confidence that peace in Bosnia will be self-sustaining.

We knew going in that as hard as it is to reconstruct a multiethnic state in a country that has survived an interethnic war, the alternative would entail even greater dangers and costs.

In the past, Bosnia has known peace with unity. It has seen its share of war with disunity. One thing it has never known is peace with disunity. Trying to replace Dayton with a partition of Bosnia would not in any way lighten our burden, for such a historically unnatural state could only be imposed. Borders would have to be redrawn and patrolled by our troops, settled populations uprooted, refugees removed again from the homes they have regained.

Partition is not only wrong, it is unrealistic. That is why we prefer the choice of risks and responsibilities that we and the parties embraced in Dayton, for that choice has served goals that are both worthwhile and achievable.

Ever since Dayton, the United States has supported an effective NATO mission in Bosnia. We have done so because it did not serve American interests to see aggression undeterred, hatred unleashed, genocide unchecked and unpunished in the heart of Europe. It would not have served our interests to see NATO become an alliance that stands up bravely to hypothetical future challenges, while running away from the real challenges of the present. NATO adaptation and enlargement would have been empty theoretical exercises had we not put this alliance to work when its interests and values are threatened.

The question now is what, if any, military presence will be required in Bosnia after SFOR's mission is complete. Neither NATO nor the United States have made any final decisions. But NATO is now assessing the range of options should we decide to stay after June 1998.

Over the coming months, President Clinton will continue to make the case that our engagement in Bosnia serves U.S. interests. Our Congress will respond with appropriate questions about the nature of our engagement and the role our allies are playing.

I will have no problem praising Europe's contributions to Bosnia. Our allies had troops on the ground long before the United States did, and we have been sharing the same risks together ever since Dayton. But there is one question I will not be able to answer, and that is why the United States has provided 90 percent of the funds for training and equipping the Bosnian police when law and order is so critical to any sensible exit strategy.

One of our most important challenges is to develop civilian police forces in Bosnia that are professional, effective and trusted by all ethnic communities. For as long as Bosnians depend on outsiders for public security, we will not be able to leave Bosnia without causing public security to fall apart. And without public security, there is simply no way we will be able to meet critical goals such as the return of refugees from Western Europe.

We must give the IPTF [International Police Task Force] the resources and qualified personnel it needs to bring local police up to European standards. The IPTF must be prepared to act assertively within its mandate. And we must accept that in the best of circumstances, its work will take time.

As we consider ways to support the IPTF, we may want to look to the kinds of capabilities that can be found in many countries, in the form of gendarmes and carabinieri [French and Italian police]. Such forces could increase SFOR's flexibility, enhancing the implementation of Dayton as well as force protection.

The United States will continue to do its share. But in key areas such as this, other members of the alliance need to do much, much more. This will increase the confidence of our Congress that both Europe and the United States will fairly and effectively share the burden of sustaining the peace process in Bosnia.

It is important that we meet our shared responsibilities in Bosnia for other reasons as well.

We may not face a challenge like Bosnia in Europe again. Indeed, our strategy of integration makes it far less likely that we will. But the United States and Europe will certainly face challenges beyond Europe's shores. Our nations share global interests that require us to work together with the same degree of solidarity that we have long maintained on this continent.

I believe we have obligations to one another, as allies and as friends, that all of us must at times strive harder to meet.

Within this category I include America's responsibility to pay its dues to international organizations such as the U.N. [United Nations] -- not least because when we do not pay, we place an even greater burden on our closest allies. All I can say is that I will have no higher priority in the coming year than to fix this problem, working with you to revise the U.N. scale of assessments and with our Congress.

But our most important responsibility is to stand together when our security interests are threatened. That is what we did for 40 years on the Fulda Gap. It is what we are doing in Bosnia. It is what we did in the Gulf War, though NATO was not formally in the lead, and what we continue to do in the gulf now.

During the Cold War, we were brought together by our overriding interest in containing the Soviet Union. We did not allow other considerations to intrude upon this one.

Many people believe that we no longer face such a unifying threat, but I believe we do, and NATO has recognized it before. It is to stop the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. It is to douse the combustible combination of technology and terror, the possibility, as unthinkable as it may seem, that weapons of mass destruction will fall into the hands of people who have no compunctions about using them.

This threat emanates largely from the Middle East and Eurasia, so Europe is especially at risk. It is the overriding security interest of our time, in the sense that it simply cannot be balanced against competing political or commercial concerns.

We need to think more deeply together about how we deal with this threat both through the alliance and outside it. A larger NATO in and of itself does not address it. We should keep these considerations in mind as we update NATO's strategic concept.

Part of our larger challenge is to set the highest possible standards against proliferation, to ensure that the rules of the international system are set by its friends, not by its enemies. With the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty now permanent, the Chemical Weapons Convention now in force, and the Comprehensive Test Ban [Treaty] signed by more than 145 countries, we have made a good start. A critical next step is to give teeth to the Biological Weapons Convention by negotiating a binding compliance protocol.

Indeed, our most critical challenge is to enforce compliance with the rules we set, and this is a question of political will.

In the case of Iraq, our nations have backed a tough sanctions, inspection and monitoring regime to prevent Saddam Hussein from ever again possessing or using weapons of mass destruction. ... We have not yet received the assurances we need to get unconditional, unrestricted access to sites in Iraq, which we agree remains our absolute goal.

But in other problem areas, we have not always seen eye to eye, especially when it comes to the proper balance between sanctions and diplomacy.

I know there is a sense among some Europeans that the United States is too inclined to act unilaterally and too quick to pull the sanctions trigger. There is likewise a sense among some Americans that too

often, the United States takes the heat for dealing with difficult issues while others take the contracts -- that our willingness to take responsibility for peace and security makes it easier for others to shirk theirs.

Perceptions do matter. But I believe we also need to look beyond them, to recognize both America's desire to act in concert with our allies whenever that is possible, as well as Europe's contributions to global peace, security and development.

We must also always remember that we need each other, that we have obligations to one another, and that we have fundamentally the same interests.

Bosnia reminded us that there is no such thing as a major threat to Europe that is not also a threat to America. In just the same way, there is no threat to America that is not also a threat to Europe. We are all members of an alliance that makes the security of the people of Paris and Oslo and Rome an American interest and responsibility, just as it makes the security of New Yorkers and Los Angelinos a European interest and responsibility.

We must also remember that when the world needs principled, purposeful leadership against aggression, proliferation and terror, the nations represented in this room have to set other concerns aside and lead because few others can or will. Each of us must act individually as if the safety of the world depended on our individual actions, because very often it does.

Not long ago, I was testifying before the United States Senate on NATO enlargement. I closed by saying that across the whole scope of human activity, from the life of the family and the neighborhood, to the politics of our nation and the world, when we want to get something done we start by banding together with those who are closest to us in values and outlook.

In a world where attention to what is wrong often drowns out attention to what is right, none of us can afford to forget our friends or to take for granted those upon whom we can rely.

That is why America cultivates its relationship with Europe and why we believe in this alliance. I have no greater desire as secretary of state than to deepen and extend the partnership among us -- a partnership in which we must always be able to count on you, and you must always be able to count on us, on this continent and around the world.

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